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ABSTRACT

Efforts to integrate the delivery of human service programs (HSP) in Colorado's El Paso County and Mesa County were examined through site visits and meetings with 34 members of HSP staff in both counties. The site visits confirmed that staff and management of HSP in both counties have implemented a series of client-centered processes to provide needed benefits and services in a holistic and comprehensive manner. Mesa County's HSP emphasizes integration of employment and training programs with income support programs, whereas El Paso County focuses primarily on income support and child welfare programs. Despite these different areas of emphasis, management and staff of HSP in both counties understand that a critical need such as housing, child care, or transportation can prevent families from achieving self-sufficiency or precipitate removal of a child from the household. Consequently, both counties conduct thorough needs assessments and take steps to provide appropriate services, regardless of programmatic boundaries. The following factors were identified as key contributors to the success of HSP in both counties: (1) a high level of cooperation and partnering between government and community organizations; (2) strong leadership with political support; (3) going beyond co-location; and (4) a pervasive "can do" attitude. (A site visit agenda is appended.) (MN)

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SERVICE INTEGRATION IN COLORADO

CONNECTING PROGRAMS TO PROVIDE BETTER SERVICES IN MESA AND EL PASO COUNTIES

ED 473 604

REPORT BY
THE ROCKEFELLER INSTITUTE OF GOVERNMENT
FOR THE CASEY STRATEGIC CONSULTING GROUP

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Albany, New York

November 2002

The Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government, the public policy research arm of the State University of New York, was established in 1982 to bring the resources of the 64-campus SUNY system to bear on public policy issues. The Institute is active nationally in research and special projects on the role of state governments in American federalism and the management and finances of both state and local governments in major areas of domestic public affairs.

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Summary

In Colorado, administration of human service programs is the responsibility of the counties. In two of those counties, progressive leadership and collaboration between agency managers, local service providers, and community organizations, with strong support from the county commissioners, have resulted in significant efforts to integrate the delivery of services.

Staff and management in Mesa and El Paso Counties have implemented processes that are client-centered and provide necessary benefits and services in a holistic and comprehensive manner. While the emphases of their efforts to integrate services are somewhat different — in Mesa County, the emphasis is on the integration of employment and training programs with income support programs; in El Paso County, integration focuses on income support and child welfare programs — the goals are similar. In both counties, management and staff understand that a critical need, such as housing, child care, or transportation, can prevent a family from achieving self-sufficiency or precipitate the removal of a child from the household. In providing benefits and services, both counties conduct thorough needs assessments and take steps to provide appropriate services, regardless of programmatic boundaries.

A number of factors contribute to the success of their efforts:

- ***A high level of cooperation and partnering between government agencies and community organizations*** — In both counties, county agencies, local service providers and community organizations partner in planning and implementing new services to meet community needs.
- ***Strong leadership with political support*** — Strong leadership, both at the executive and program level, and clear support from county political leaders who are engaged in human service issues contribute significantly to the progress in integrating services. There is a clear

sense of shared mission that flows from the leadership to staff.

- *Going beyond co-location* — Staff from multiple county agencies and private service providers work together within the office, in many cases as members of teams. In both counties, the connections between child welfare and other programs are emphasized, particularly on El Paso County. Teaming strengthens connections between programs, increases awareness of the availability of a wider range of services, and facilitates sharing a common vision and goals.

- *A pervasive "can do" attitude* — In both sites, it was clear that managers and staff enthusiastically support the agency's mission and goals, and that they are willing to do whatever it takes to provide services so that families become and remain self-sufficient and stable. This attitude is the result of the factors listed above as well as the ongoing efforts of leadership to change agency culture.

Service Integration in Colorado

Connecting Programs to Provide Better Services in Mesa and El Paso Counties

Background

Introduction

This paper is one in a series of reports that describe efforts to integrate the delivery of human service programs in different locations around the country. Funded by the Casey Strategic Consulting Group, the project is designed to document lessons learned, analyze critical success factors, and describe the operational processes and tools, including information technologies, that have contributed to these efforts.

In April 2002 staff from the Rockefeller Institute of Government conducted a site visit in human service offices in Mesa and El Paso counties in Colorado. Locations visited included the administrative offices of county human service programs and local county offices. The goal of the site visit was to assess the extent of service integration and to compare the different approaches taken by these two counties.

In both counties, efforts to improve the circumstances of poor families extend beyond the projects described in this paper, which focuses on service integration. For example, both counties are participating in a state-sponsored managed care pilot project for child welfare services. Readers should note, therefore, that staff in both counties are involved in numerous projects to improve services that are not described in this paper. The information provided here is intended to illustrate efforts to integrate services.

The Human Service Delivery System in Colorado

In Colorado, administration of human service programs is the responsibility of counties. In recent years the state has given the counties greater authority and autonomy to develop and implement policies and to manage personnel. From a programmatic perspective, this devolution of authority has resulted in significant variation in program design.

In both counties, all human service programs are the responsibility of a director of human services who answers to the county board of commissioners. As a consequence, there are fewer bureaucratic barriers to coordination and integration than exist in other jurisdictions since the majority of human service programs are within the same department.

Efforts to Integrate Human Services in Mesa and El Paso Counties

Mesa County

Site Demographics

Mesa County is on the western slope of the Rocky Mountains in Colorado, near the border with Utah. County population was approximately 115,000 in 2000, with most residents living in and around Grand Junction, the county seat. The percentage of persons living below the poverty line is about one-third more than the state average.[1] The most common employment is in services, which typically involves relatively low wages. The unemployment rate of 5.2 percent in March 2002 was slightly lower than the state average of 5.3 percent.[2]

For human service programs, challenges include a high percentage of high-school dropouts, drug abuse (particularly meth-amphetamine use) and providing culturally-appropriate services to a growing Hispanic population. Local politics are conservative, though the members of the Board of County Commissioners have

taken a leadership role in increasing the level of services and encouraging coordination of local human service agencies and providers.

The Mesa County Department of Human Services

In Mesa County, service integration means more than a simple focus on employment, as evidenced by the county's mission statement. "The Mission of the Department of Human Services is to help individuals and families achieve safety, independence and self sufficiency through the provision of professional, fiscally responsible quality human services in a progressive, collaborative and customer service oriented environment."[3]

A major focus of the county's efforts to improve services for residents is the Mesa County Workforce Center, developed as the county's response to welfare reform. In addition to creating the Workforce Center, leadership of the Mesa County Department of Human Services, the County Board of Commissioners, and other community organizations have taken steps to develop services to fill unmet needs. An example is the development of a transportation system now available to human service agency clients as well as the general public. Another example is housing, where waiting lists for subsidized housing have been problematic. Community agencies have worked together to provide training for clients to improve relationships between clients and landlords and reduce the attrition rate of landlords in the voucher program.

Although they are not co-located at the Workforce Center, the child support enforcement, child welfare, and child protective services programs work closely with staff at the Center. One regular point of interaction is in team staffings that are part of the intake process at the Workforce Center, described below.

In addition to the shared physical location of the Workforce Center, managers of county programs and service providers continue to invest significant time in team building, cross training, and improving relationships between programs with staff at the center and in the larger community. The culture change from eligibility determina-

tion processes to a customer-focused, work-first approach was at first resisted, but is now strongly supported by staff.

The Mesa County Workforce Center

Unlike one-stop job centers in many jurisdictions that are administered through other structures, the Mesa County Workforce Center is a division of the county Department of Human Services. Planning and development of the center were the result of the efforts of the Mesa County Board of Commissioners and a number of government agencies and community groups, including Mesa Developmental Services, Vocational Rehabilitation, the AFL-CIO, the school district, Vocational Education, Hilltop Community Resources (a large community service provider), the Chamber of Commerce, and the Mesa County Department of Human Services. The Workforce Center, located in a remodeled church building, opened in February 1998.

The Mesa County Workforce Center offers services for employers and job seekers. For employers, services include customized screening and referral of qualified applicants, listings of job orders, recruiting of job applicants, educational seminars, business resource

The Mesa County Workforce Center

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information, information on training opportunities, labor force reduction assistance, and local labor market information.

Services for job seekers include employment opportunities, comprehensive assessments of skills and abilities, screening and job referrals, pre-employment skills, an Adult Learning Lab, computer classes, and individual job development. The Center offers a Resource Room for customers with Internet connections for posting job listings and resumes and for job searching. Phones are available along with a fax machine and copier to assist individuals in their job search. Individual assistance with resume preparation and interest testing is also available on-site. GED and Adult Basic Education as well as English as a Second Language classes are offered during the day and in the evening at no cost to the public. Located with the Workforce Center is the Kiddin' Around Learning Center, which provides childcare to clients and to the public.[4]

A key feature of the Workforce Center is the integration of income support and other human service programs with employment and training programs. Staff from the following partner agencies are located on-site, and screening for needed services is part of the intake process. Partners on-site include:

- The Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, which provides employment and employer services, Veterans' employment services, and an unemployment insurance referee;
- Colorado Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Colorado Project WIN, which provide services to persons with disabilities;
- Hilltop Community Resources, Inc, a large local service agency, which provides a range of job training programs at the Center;
- The Professional Services Division, which gives instruction in computer skills for a variety of office software;

- Mesa County Department of Human Services, which provides income support programs, such as TANF, Medicaid, Food Stamps, and child care assistance;
- The Job Corps;
- Experience Works (Green Thumb, Inc.), which provides employment programs for older workers;
- Rocky Mountain SER, which provides employment and education assistance for migrant and seasonal agricultural workers;
- The Ex-Offenders Reintegration program, which provides support services for ex-offenders;
- The Domestic Violence Program; and
- Colorado West Mental Health Services.

Integrating Client Processes

For clients, the integration of services at the Workforce Center means that in addition to employment-related services, supportive services and financial assistance are also readily available. When clients first visit the Center, the receptionist determines whether they are seeking only employment services. If so, they are directed to the appropriate location in the office. Clients who express a need for other benefits and services participate in a process that, while clearly focused on employment, is designed to address other needs. Clients first participate in an employment workshop and are given an application packet to complete. At a second visit soon thereafter, clients attend a class in which the various benefits and services, including child support enforcement and income support programs, are described, and the application is accepted. During the next few days, eligibility for TANF and other programs is determined, and clients are scheduled for a three-day class called "Pay It Forward," which emphasizes client strengths in the development of Individual Responsibility Plans.

Each case is then reviewed by a team of staff members from the various on-site partner agencies, as well as child welfare casework-

ers, if appropriate. The team meets weekly to review new cases, recommending a package of benefits and services to meet individual client and family needs. For clients, the result is a process in which employment services and needed supports are provided in an integrated plan in a single location.

The connection with child welfare services is particularly noteworthy. As part of the intake process for both income support and child welfare programs, staff routinely check the information systems of the other program to determine whether there is an active case. For example, when a family applies for TANF benefits, the child welfare system is checked to determine if the family has already had a case opened in the child welfare system. For cases that are open in both systems, treatment plans are developed jointly. Services and benefits, including intensive case management, focus on strengthening the family and ensuring a stable environment for children. This approach is taken in situations where there is a danger that a child will be removed from the home as well as cases where a child has already been removed. In this way benefits and services that might otherwise be considered solely to improve employability are also seen as addressing needs directly related to safety and child welfare. TANF and related benefits and services serve two purposes — to move families toward economic self-sufficiency *and* to intervene and prevent the need for more intensive child welfare services. This approach, which sees TANF and related income support benefits and services as preventive, is also a principal goal of program management in El Paso County, as described in more detail below.

There are limits to integration in Mesa County, however. Separate case files are maintained for many of the programs and services, and separate information systems must be used to determine eligibility. A state-provided information system, CACTIS, does allow staff from the various programs to maintain and share case notes, but overall information systems' support is considered to be problematic by staff. Cases that do not involve employment-related services, such as Food Stamp-only and Medicaid-only cases, are handled in a separate county office in Grand Junction. Child

support enforcement and child welfare workers are located in that office as well.

El Paso County

Site Demographics

El Paso County, on the eastern slope of the Rockies, has a substantially larger population than Mesa County, with more than 500,000 residents in 2000, who live primarily in and around Colorado Springs, the county seat. The population is rising rapidly, with an increase in county population of approximately 10,000 people each year. The percentages of children and adults with incomes below the poverty line are slightly below the state average. Major sources of employment are the five local military bases, the medical community, the service industry, and telemarketing. The unemployment rate of 6.6 percent in March 2002 was slightly higher than the state average of 5.3 percent.[5]

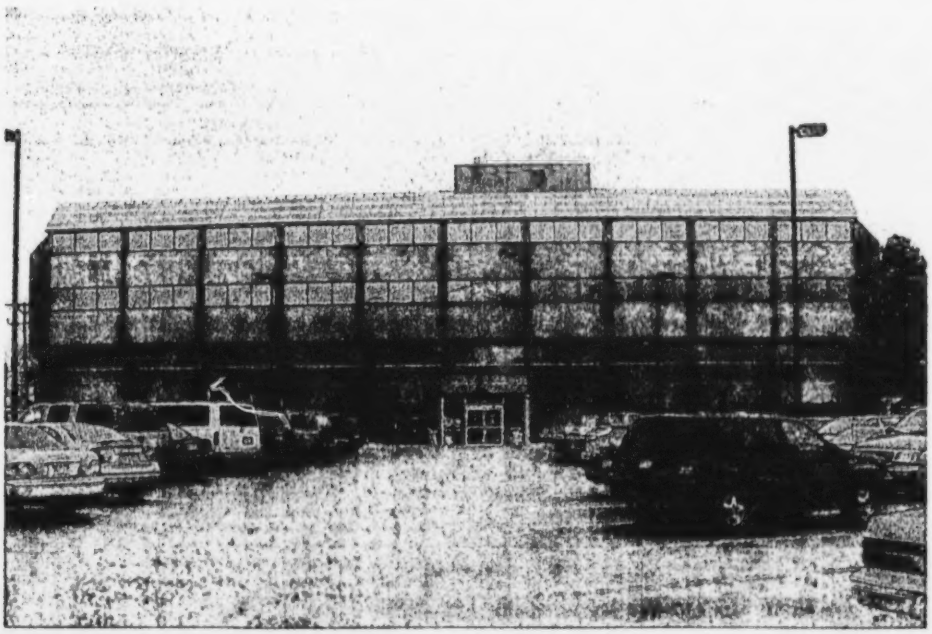
The El Paso County Department of Human Services

Service integration in El Paso County involves many projects, including highly coordinated child welfare and income support programs. The vision statement of the El Paso Department of Human Services (DHS) is "To eliminate poverty and family violence in El Paso County." The mission is "To strengthen families, assure safety, promote self-sufficiency, eliminate poverty, and improve the quality of life in our community."[6] The blending of income support and child welfare programs is perhaps best described as follows, "TANF must be the primary preventive program for child welfare and child welfare must become an anti-poverty program."[7]

Most human service programs are located in two adjacent buildings in the center of Colorado Springs. Programs with staff located in these offices include:

- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF);

- Food Assistance program;
- Food Stamps;
- Medicaid;
- Goodwill Industries Career Development Center;
- Employment First (job search);
- Teen Self Sufficiency (helps teens become self-sufficient and live on their own);
- Child Care Assistance;
- Child Support Collections;
- Parent Opportunity Program, which helps non-custodial parents meet child support obligations through employment assistance and other services;
- Transitions Team, which provides post-employment support to families to maintain and upgrade employment;
- TANF Kinship and Family Empowerment Services, which provides supports for grandparents and other caretakers raising relative children and for teens and teen parents;



The El Paso County Department of Human Services

- Adult Protection and Foster Care Services;
- Family Preservation;
- Intensive Family Intervention Team, which focuses on pre-adolescent and teenage behavior problems; and
- Faith Partners, which assists individuals and families leaving welfare who need additional support with issues related to the transition from welfare.

Located in a third building in the complex under separate administration are:

- The Office of Veteran and Militay Affairs (there is a large population of current and retred military personnel in the Colorado Springs area),and
- Senior Services.

El Paso DHS staff and partners provice services in other locations in the county, including:

- Fountain Community Services, located in the Lorraine School in Fountain, where DHS saff and partners provide health, human services, and other supports at the local level;
- The Center on Fathering, which serves as a central location where fathers can get services such as education, training, and a support group to encourage and facilitate supporting their children;
- The Teen Resource Center, a partnership between the city of Colorado Springs, the county and 30 community partners, which focuses on helping teens achieve educational, employment, and self-sufficiency goals; and
- The Family Visitation Center, which provides children in the foster care system and their families with a home-like setting for visitation.

Client Intake Processes

El Paso County has implemented a standard intake process for multiple programs and services. When clients first come into the agency and indicate an interest in benefits, they are asked to complete a self-assessment form and a request for household information. The information requested is relatively comprehensive, including information about employment history, family needs, children's health, information about absent parents, etc. Once the forms are completed, clients meet with a staff member who completes the initial assessment process, which is an open-ended discussion and review of the client self-assessment, to determine the client's job readiness level as well as the types of benefits and services that the family needs. This interview can last from twenty minutes to one-half day, depending on the situation and client needs. The interview includes "tickler" questions that indicate the presence of problems such as domestic violence, substance abuse, disabilities, and mental health issues that may lead to a more in-depth screening. In these cases, the assessor sends information to a partner agency for an additional interview.

The result of the assessment is a determination of family needs and a decision regarding appropriate benefits and services that can be provided by the county or through a community agency. If the latter, immediate contact is made with the agency during the interview. Because there is a preference to avoid ongoing TANF eligibility, if there is a need for immediate financial assistance, but the client appears to be job-ready, one of two diversion programs is suggested. The county diversion program (Diversion I) is for families not eligible for TANF (the income limit is substantially higher), and is designed to help families retain employment. It is a once-in-a-lifetime payment, and by accepting it the client agrees not to file for assistance for at least twelve months. Exceptions are frequently granted for good cause. Diversion II is a state program for families potentially eligible for TANF. It is available for a maximum of two months, includes intensive job search and meetings with job developers, and is designed to meet immediate needs that support employment. Payments are made almost immediately. If the client chooses to file for TANF, she is scheduled for an appointment with an eligibility technician, who may also serve as the case manager. Other cases in which the client is

closer to job-ready are managed by contract staff with greater expertise in employment and training programs.

If there is an indication that there is potential or active child welfare program involvement, then the child welfare worker is contacted to participate in the appointment. Child welfare workers can also refer cases for intake and assessment for income support programs. Some child welfare workers have been trained to do the up-front assessment. For cases active in both systems, the TANF worker is invited to participate in case staffings. An office policy is to routinely check new cases at intake to determine whether there is an open case in the child welfare system in order to ensure coordination of case planning between programs.

El Paso County Program Initiatives

Following are brief descriptions of some of the El Paso DHS programs and activities that emphasize the connections between income support and child welfare programs. The descriptions were provided by DHS.[8]

- **Kinship Services: Partnering with Grandparents and other Kin**
  Through the TANF program, DHS provides kinship services to grandparents raising their grandchildren. Increased financial assistance and support services are provided to keep the extended kinship family intact. Kinship families who are eligible for these "child only" TANF grants make up 30% of the welfare caseload in the county. Similar caseloads appear in welfare caseloads throughout the country. DHS believes that many of these families are identical to families who enter the child welfare system, except that relatives, typically grandparents, have stepped in to help the family before the call to Child Welfare occurs. Providing strength-based support to families decreases the need for them to become more deeply involved in the system. Services are based on what families determine is needed to maintain children in their homes.

Advancing this effort required specific organizational changes. At the implementation of Colorado's Welfare Reform law in July 1997, DHS transferred several of their best child welfare staff to TANF, matching them with talented TANF technicians to create a team specially designed to serve grandparents and other relative caretakers. The entire team is funded by TANF. Workers in this unit have established Grandparent Support Groups, which connect families with community resources and help to establish guardianships. Legal Guardianship allows grandparents to approve medical treatments or enrollment in school or other special activities. Staff have access to flexible funding to assist families — akin to wrap-around services in child welfare — but with a TANF funding base. The program is an alternative to child welfare. TANF funds support preventive service options for children at low to moderate levels of risk, intervening before escalating crises require intensive services.

- **Domestic Violence Coordination**

  In a survey completed by the initial group of recipients (2,300) receiving welfare on July 1, 1997, approximately one-third responded affirmatively to the question, "Have you ever been a victim of domestic violence?" In response to this information, DHS contracted with the local Center for the Prevention of Domestic Violence to co-locate staff in the DHS office to provide client services and staff training. This domestic violence professional also serves as a resource to staff on individual cases. Funded as part of the county's welfare reform initiatives, this contract assists in the development of additional domestic violence-related community resources, such as emergency housing and treatment/support groups. Services are culturally relevant and include Spanish-speaking and Asian-Pacific focused services. Skilled services from domestic violence professionals help to bridge the gap between child protection, protection of the adult victim, and opportunities to help the family become economically independent.

- **Child Care Coordination**

  The Alliance for Kids is a broad-based community group. Based on the impetus of the Alliance, DHS implemented specific strategies, including:

  - Increasing provider reimbursement rates for child care services to child welfare families and low-income families;
  - On-site enrollment for low income child care programs in child care centers and homes where parents drop off and pick up their children;
  - Development of a child care resource and referral database for all agency-served families, including those receiving child welfare services. A family's child care needs can be specifically matched with available resources;
  - Writing grants and serving as the fiscal agent based on priorities identified by the Alliance for Kids. DHS provides assistance in applying for child care grants focused on improving quality and building capacity for low-income children;
  - Increased payments for guaranteed child care slots and full day/full year child care so parents can choose quality care and move more effectively from welfare to work. This care is provided in partnership with the local Headstart program, child care providers, and school district pre-school programs.

  Child care has been expanded and enhanced in a manner that allows these services to become a vital element in the county's prevention and early intervention approaches to child welfare.

- **Teen Parent Support**

  In El Paso County in 1997, 319 girls age 10-17 delivered babies (12% of total births in El Paso County). Teen parents are a major concern for DHS due to the high risk to the teen's child for neglect and abuse, aban-

donment, and poor parenting due to unstable home life, poverty, lack of stimulation and education, poor nutrition and development, and the absence of a stable father figure.

Teen parents, either heads of household or household members in TANF-eligible families, are served by a team of eligibility technicians, social caseworkers and community partners working together under the funding and program auspices of TANF. The initial target group consists of pregnant and parenting teens on TANF. Plans are underway to include all pregnant and parenting teens that come to the attention of the agency. Goals and outcomes are integrated into the program by measuring educational achievement, individual and family functioning, and self-sufficiency. Through the Teen TANF Program team, teen parent families receive assessments and case management services, home visits, crisis intervention, nurse visitation, parenting instruction, continuing education, job training, and mentoring.

- **Employment Support**
  El Paso County has developed an employment support program to serve children aging out of foster care and those growing out of welfare dependence. The program is a collaboration with employment programs typically thought of as connected to welfare reform only. The program coordinates with the teen parent program described above around independence issues. While these support services address two different populations, both focus on asset building, goal setting, educational achievements and self-sufficiency strategies leading to employment. Foster care children currently being served in the agency's Independent Living program are served in this model by social caseworkers and employment counselors working together.

- **Joint Family Preservation/TANF Services Planning**
  DHS has set a goal to combine family preservation and foster care placement prevention services with "pre-

vention" focused TANF (welfare) services. This approach is designed to provide families entering the "system" from either the income support or child welfare side with comprehensive, strength-based services with the lowest level of intrusion into the family. This speaks to concerns about the impact of welfare reform on the child welfare system, particularly as families exhaust benefits due to the welfare time limit. In El Paso County's approach, TANF dollars are used to support casework plans providing, for example, domestic violence services or drug and alcohol treatment. Service coordination is achieved by including such therapeutic services in not only child welfare treatment plans, but TANF individual responsibility or employability plans as well.

- **Joint Training**
  In collaboration with the University of Utah School of Social Work, four states, and several universities, DHS is implementing cross-system training, assessment, and services. This effort includes child welfare and TANF, but also incorporates substance abuse, domestic violence, and the mental health system. The project, funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is training staff in leadership skills, systems change and training strategies. Members of the design team, especially consumers, serve as the co-trainers. This methodology lays the foundation for training competent staff who can successfully implement integrated, cross-system services in partnership with families.

- **Faith Partners Program**
  This is a faith-based mentoring program formed by several local churches in response to welfare reform. Faith Partners assists individuals and families to leave welfare dependency by providing supports to assist in the transition. Mentoring teams of volunteers from the member churches lend encouragement, support, and life skills coaching to families. A team of approximately five volunteers who have committed to serve for one year is assigned to each family in the program.

DHS provides access to the program by asking clients if they are interested in the program. If so, volunteer coordinators, who are located in the DHS office, make arrangements for a team to begin working with the family.[9]

Lessons Learned

Over the last decade, managers of human service programs in both counties have made significant progress in reworking local service delivery systems and processes. Managers' insights provide useful lessons regarding service integration and changing the nature of human service programs

The role of leaders is to lead, not micromanage — In both counties, strong executive leadership is supported by enthusiastic, experienced, and knowledgeable managers. Mid-level managers are encouraged to be creative, take responsibility for the day-to-day operation of their programs, and work collaboratively with their peers and community partners. The directors of the county human services offices see their role at a macro level — to take a broad view across the programs for which they have responsibility — and to depend on their managers to provide expertise and handle most operational issues, rather than micromanaging details. The directors ensure that the mission of the agency is clear to all staff and provide the resources to support the mission, while managers and staff get the job done without worrying that their decisions will be second-guessed.

Staff development needs constant attention — In both counties, managers emphasized the importance of continual attention to staff development and training. In El Paso County, there was significant turnover during the initial stages of shifting philosophy and operations to a more holistic approach that emphasizes the connections between income support and child welfare programs. Staff who were not comfortable with the change were given the opportunity to move into other positions. There has been substantial movement of staff across disciplines; a number of the managers of income support programs have a background in child welfare programs. Staff have

participated in cross-training provided by in-house staff as well as outside experts, as described above.

Taking advantage of opportunities for early intervention and prevention — Viewing programs and services as a continuum of care, rather than separately, allows programs that are not generally viewed as preventive to serve that function. For example, in El Paso County, children who exhibit problematic behavior while in child care provide an opportunity for early intervention that may reduce the need for more intensive services in the future. A child's unwillingness to follow instruction may be an indication that there are problems at home that can be addressed at an early stage, eliminating the necessity for more costly and intrusive child welfare services.

You never get there — As communities grow and change, family needs change. There is therefore a constant need for programs to adapt, experiment, and evolve. Managers in both counties indicated that there are a number of issues they need to address, including child care, early childhood education, and additional integration of income support and child welfare programs. While the goals of the programs remain relatively constant, the means by which those goals are achieved can and should change.

Critical Success Factors

A number of factors contribute to the success of efforts to integrate and improve services in Mesa and El Paso Counties.

Devolution of responsibility for program design from the state to the counties — State officials have given the counties greater flexibility and responsibility in designing and administering programs, most notably with welfare reform. In programs that were previously administered by state staff or were subject to state personnel rules and processes, including child welfare and employment and training programs, state staff are being converted to, or replaced by, county staff. The flexibility to design programs that meet local needs and

local control of staff and resources were cited as significant factors in the success of programs in both counties.

Location of a wide range of services within a single government agency — In addition to local control, the inclusion of a wide range of programs within one organization under the direction of a single, high-level executive has facilitated the integration of programs in both counties. While this may seem obvious on its face, it is a factor that should not be ignored. When compared with integration efforts in other jurisdictions, the progress that has been made in El Paso and Mesa counties to coordinate and integrate programs that are much more separate in other jurisdictions is clearly influenced by a single governance structure. A significant difference in the level of integration of income support and employment and training programs is evident in Mesa and El Paso counties. In Mesa County, the Workforce Investment Act One-Stop center is managed within the same department as income support and child welfare programs; in El Paso, the One-Stop has a separate administrative structure. It is probably more than a coincidence that, while the El Paso County Department of Human Services works closely with the One-Stop, the level of integration is less than in Mesa County.

Political leadership and program managers who share a common vision — There are close working relationships between program officials and county political leaders in both counties. Though local politics and political leaders (in these counties, the County Commissioners) tend to be conservative, it is clear that the Commissioners support the vision of comprehensive and integrated services that support family stability and self-sufficiency.

The close rapport between program officials, political leadership, and the directors of private service providers in Mesa County was obvious during the site visit. By modeling partnering and collaborative behaviors, leadership sets a tone for staff. As the director of one local agency said, "In Mesa County, partners are truly partners."

Willingness to share risks and credit for success — County agencies and community partners are willing to share the financial risks

inherent in creating new services to support families. In Mesa County, the Kiddin' Around Child Care Center, located beside the Workforce Center, provides regular child care for local families and temporary child care for clients of the Workforce Center. If charges to parents for child care are insufficient to cover the costs, the partners are willing to subsidize care from other funding sources. Sharing responsibility for supporting families also means giving up "ownership" of clients and sharing credit for success when clients become self-sufficient.

Team building and culture changing activities — Management in both counties have invested significant effort in team-building and culture-changing activities, and continue to do so. Moving from stovepiped, eligibility-determination focused processes to working in teams, with a holistic approach to family services, has been a big change. Activities such as cross-program training, special projects that involve staff from multiple programs, a diversity initiative in El Paso County, sponsoring agency events for staff, and recognizing staff accomplishments reinforces the integration of staff and programs. Managers have shifted workers' thinking from a victim mentality, which focused on factors over which workers had little control, to those things that they can control, creating a "can do" attitude.

Family involvement in plans/making choices and intensive services for the most at-risk families — Both counties have adopted strength-based assessment, focusing efforts to facilitate self-sufficiency on marketable skills and attributes possessed by clients. Families are encouraged to participate in development of Individual Responsibility Contracts (TANF) and Family Service Plans (child welfare), including attending team staffings where their cases are discussed. In Mesa County, families in danger of being sanctioned and other complex cases receive more intensive services provided by "intervention specialists," who make home visits to view first-hand family circumstances, broker services, and help break down resistance to program participation by the family.

Measuring the effects of programs — Both counties have taken steps to measure the effects of their programs. In Mesa County, they

have contracted with a researcher at the local state college; in El Paso County, they have hired a full-time research and evaluation coordinator. Going beyond common measures that focus on outcomes related to individual programs, such as the number of TANF clients that have moved to employment, they are attempting to look more broadly at the larger issues. In Mesa County, this involves tracking clients both during and after stays on TANF to measure self-sufficiency in terms of employment income and government-provided benefits sufficient to support a family. However, as seems to be the case with most efforts to integrate services, neither county has implemented processes to measure the effect of service integration.

Conclusion

In Mesa and El Paso counties, local leaders of human service programs have taken advantage of the flexibility and autonomy provided by the state to develop client-centered and integrated service delivery systems. While the emphases of their efforts differ slightly — in Mesa County, it is the integration of income support and employment and training programs, in El Paso County, income support and child welfare programs — the intent and many of the processes by which they achieve their goals are similar.

To a large extent, programs and services are provided as a continuum, rather than separately. From initial assessment through service planning to the provision of benefits and services, families' needs are addressed in a holistic manner. To the extent that resources permit, whatever is needed to ensure the safety of children and assist parents in moving to self-sufficiency is provided. This is accomplished in a number of ways — assessing for multiple needs through a common intake process, going beyond co-location to create teams that include staff from multiple programs, partnering of county agencies and local service providers at the leadership and staff levels, and a shared vision that is continually reinforced. The result in both counties is a multi-faceted yet cohesive approach to human service delivery that management and staff are justifiably proud of.

Endnotes

1 Statistics from U. S. Census Quickfacts at http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/.

2 From U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics unemployment data at http://www.bls.gov/lau/.

3 From the Mesa County Department of Human Services Website at http://www.mcdss.co.gov/.

4 Information provided by the Mesa County Workforce Center.

5 From U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics unemployment data at http://www.bls.gov/lau/.

6 The vision and mission statements are from the El Paso county website at http://www.mcdss.co.gov/ officials, and are included in most literature provided to clients.

7 From materials provided by El Paso County Department of Human Services.

8 From *An Overview of Services* by the El Paso County, Colorado Department of Human Services.

9 From *Faith Partners: "The Journey" — Faith-based Mentoring*, by Jackie Jaramillo, Executive Director, Faith Partners.

Attachment 1
Site Visit Agenda —
Mesa and El Paso Counties, Colorado

Monday, April 22 — Mesa County

- Tom Papin, Executive Director, Mesa County Department of Human Services
- Sue Tuffin, Director, Mesa County Workforce Center
- Susan Diaz, Director, Self-Sufficiency and Employment Programs
- Charlotte Trujillo, Self-Sufficiency Supervisor
- Brian Heath and Marilynn Mestas — Intervention Specialists
- Gina Luby, Employment and Training Supervisor
- Tomi Currier — Director, Kiddin' Around Child Care/Learning Center

Tuesday, April 23

- Breakfast with Mesa County Staff and:
  - Kathy Hall, Chair, Mesa County Board of Commissioners,
  - Doralynn Genova, Mesa County Board of Commissioners,
  - Tom Updike, Executive Director, Colorado West Regional Mental Health, Inc.
- Sally Schaefer, CEO, Hilltop Community Resources
- Dr. John Redifer, Researcher, Mesa State College
- Shelly Cruse and Yvette Underwood, Employment Specialists
- Laura Burke, Eligibility Specialist

- Janet Hamilton and Jackie Jacobs, Employment Counselors

Thursday, April 25 — El Paso County

- David Berns, Director, El Paso Department of Human Services
- Barbara Drake, Deputy Director, El Paso Department of Human Services
- Rebecca Jacobs, Assistance Payments Manager
- Linda Kite, Family Independence Program Clerical Support Supervisor
- Marie Parker, Teen Self-Sufficiency Program Manager
- Maija Schiedel, Children and Family Services Manager
- Stacy Frost, Social Caseworker IV, Chafee Independent Living
- Levetta Love, TANF Manager
- Cheryl Kubes, Supervisor, Assessment Unit
- Terri Ryan-Thomas, Social Services Supervisor, Child Welfare Intake
- Nancy Baumhover, Social Services Supervisor
- Jeff Wells, Social Services Supervisor, CPA Management
- Pat Freda, Social Services Supervisor, Adoption

Friday, April 26

- Lloyd Malone, Director, Children and Family Services
- Roni Spaulding, Community/Adult Programs Manager
- Betsi Frederickson, Social Services Supervisor
- Christine Schmidt, Administrative Services Manager
- Toni Herman, Contract Services Supervisor
- Matt Caywood, Research and Evaluation Coordinator

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